



Offering young people a chance at a promising future

Mentoring and Mobility:  
Evaluation of Promise Foundation Pilot  
Programme



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# About Promise Foundation

The Promise Foundation promotes the potential of young people by offering them direction and broadening their horizons. The charity was inspired by Promise, who at the age of twelve was transformed by her relationship with a mentor and achieved far beyond her own expectations, eventually gaining an excellent degree from Cambridge University. Our aim is to provide support to young people at a time in their lives when the decisions they make have long-term effects on their future. Central to everything we do is our commitment to social mobility and our belief that this should be a collective responsibility.

## To achieve this, we

Identify individuals who will benefit from the mentoring programme

Deliver a mentoring programme to secondary school children, led by professionals

Create opportunities by identifying relevant work experience opportunities or employment

Run events and training programmes to inspire, inform and equip both mentees and mentors with the tools they need for success

"I have been moved and inspired by the Promise Foundation's vision – its ambition to make available to young people the necessary tools for success through personal mentoring will assist so many young people in their quest for personal and professional development. Promise Foundation is a vital step towards increasing social mobility"

(Baroness Young of Hornsey OBE)



## Aim of the Mentoring Project

Working in collaboration with its strategic partner, Queens Park Community School (QPCS), the charity's pilot programme began in September 2013. With the aim to tackle educational disadvantage by providing mentoring, advice, and training to young people from underprivileged backgrounds and with a core focus on what we term the 'silent middles' (by this we are referring to those young people who make up the bulk of the comprehensive educational system – those who are not identified as 'Gifted and Talented' nor displaying Special Educational Needs and therefore have no recourse to specific

public funding or interventions), the charity began its work in the London borough of Brent - an area with the 10th highest level of child poverty out of the 32 boroughs and ranked amongst the top 15% most deprived areas in the country. Figures from the Greater London Authority show 16% of children in Brent are living in families dependent on 'out of work' benefits.

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission found in its recent report, *State of the Nation 2015: Social Mobility and Child Poverty in Great Britain*:

**"At the very bottom of society there are more than one million children living a life of persistent [deprivation]. They are excluded from sharing in the many opportunities that life in modern Britain affords.**

**This form of social exclusion at the very bottom of British society finds an echo in the exclusive social make-up of those at the very top. Those who rise to the top in Britain today look remarkably similar to those who rose to the top half a century ago."**





Promise Foundation has found that mentoring is at the heart of social inclusion and, therefore, leads to upwardly mobile communities. Our core objective is to deploy the resources of the community to provide young people with a mentoring relationship that unlocks their unique promise. The charity has effectively deployed the resources of it's local community in Queens Park (North West London) by bringing young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds together with (what we call) the 'meaningful middle class' (by this we mean middle class professionals who identify the need to nurture communities transformed by the growing trend of gentrification in inner city neighbourhoods). In his recent speech on Life Chances, David Cameron puts forward his ideas for fostering an equal society, where everyone, from the outset, has the opportunity to succeed educationally and socially. In one part he says:

"It's about building a country where opportunity is more equal, with stronger communities and young people who have the experiences and the networks

to get out there and take on the world. Sometimes we can make politics sound very complicated, but for me it all comes back to a simple ambition: to give every child the chance to dream big dreams, and the tools – the character, the knowledge and the confidence, that will let their potential shine brightly."

Study reviews on mentoring (principally those from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF), within a variety of populations, has demonstrated its value in the areas of behaviour, attitudes, physical health, wellbeing, motivation, interpersonal relationships and careers.

In the Promise Foundation Mentoring Programme, the volunteer mentors are local professionals who are able to show the mentees, realistically, the world of work as well as offer them tangible options that can increase wellbeing. Our mentors are also able to understand and identify some of the barriers that may be preventing our mentees from reaching their full potential.

Again, in his speech on Life Chances, David Cameron says: "The informal networks of support, the mentors, the social connections, all help to give young people the soft skills and extra advantages they need to navigate the fast-moving seas of the modern world." He also goes on to say: "Many people can look back at

their younger selves and can point to someone, or remember, perhaps a parent or teacher, a sports coach, or their first boss, and say 'that's the person who really found my passion. They're the ones who made the difference for me.' But if you haven't ever had someone in your life who really believes in you, who sees your

potential and helps bring it to the fore, the sands of time can drain away, and your talents can remain hidden. . . So by finding inspirational role models and encouraging them to give up some time, I believe we really can help young people make big plans for their future." We, at Promise Foundation, also believe this to be true.

# Mentoring is a community effort

The charity is a community effort, led by parents and business owners. Promise mentors are local volunteers who are willing to be role models for young people and play a critical role in supporting them. Our most effective mentors are sensitive to others' cultures and have an ability to communicate successfully across cultural lines.

## **Our mentors help young people to:**

- Increase their self-esteem, motivation and confidence
- Develop and acquire skills
- Gain a wider perspective on career options
- Draw up a personal action plan
- Develop a positive mental attitude
- Improve goal setting and action planning skills
- Develop interpersonal skills, e.g. negotiating and listening skills
- Achieve their goals

## **Our mentors also facilitate:**

- Mock interviews, CV writing and letters of application
- Work shadowing and/or work experience
- Introduction to new networks and contacts
- Visiting college/university open days, training programmes and fairs
- Liaising with school careers' adviser

Meeting for an hour a week over a period of one academic year (September to July), means opportunities are created by identifying relevant areas of improvement such as overall progress in a subject area, work ethic, homework completion, attendance levels and punctuality, work experience and employment. We run on-going training programmes throughout the duration of the mentoring relationships to inspire, inform and equip both mentor and mentee, encouraging them to develop new skills and broaden their social, academic and employment expectations.



# Our mentees

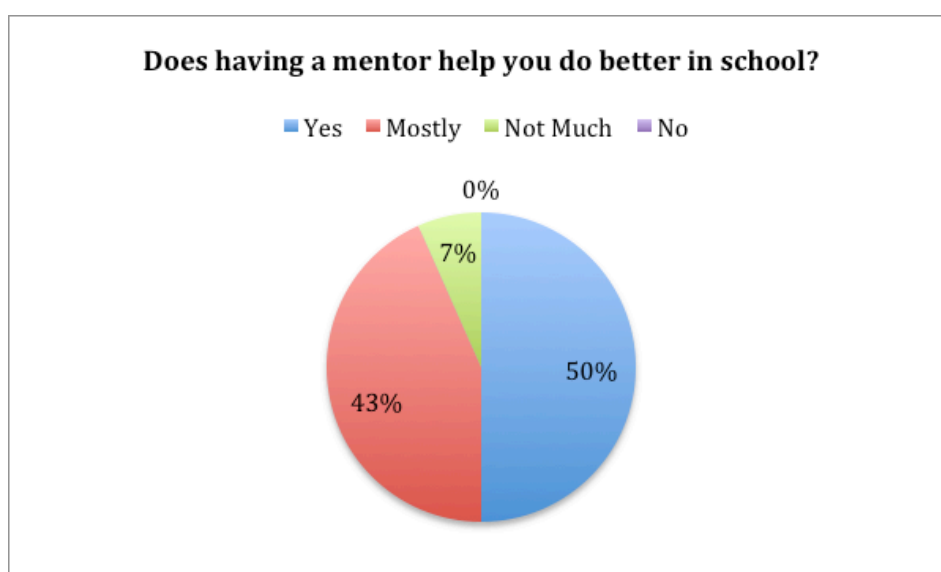
Our mentees come from 'complex' households in which pressing issues are a reality for them and their families. Mentees are referred by educational staff – Heads of Year - based on the following: Pupil Premium, living in lone-parent families, in care, or young people from families otherwise identified as having 'complex' needs such as crowded housing. 60% of our mentees do not have English as their first language.

## Summary of outcomes

Evidence show that between September 2013 – March 2016, the Foundation has had a direct impact on young people's lives. As early as the first year of the project, mentees improved in more than one area of their subject choices and that their overall wellbeing, including self-esteem also improved. It was found that mentees were starting to take more

interest in their futures and were beginning to identify and achieve their potential through regular weekly meetings with their mentors. They were seen to be engaging more with the choices they were being offered in terms of study plans, reviewing ways of dealing with situations, preparing for the world of work, looking into further education and accepting opportunities that were offered in various work

placements. Mentees' ability to think optimistically about the future, both in setting goals, and in taking small steps towards them, generally improved over the course of the year. For instance when asked 'does having a mentor help you do better in school?' Most mentees were certain that their relationship with their mentors had a direct correlation with improvement in school.



See appendix for more information on mentee end of year evaluation questionnaire.

# Monitoring of outcomes

In order to ensure that the Foundation is delivering for young people, we monitor progress through a number of mediums.

## Partner school progress reports

Targets agreed by mentee and mentor at the beginning of the mentoring relationship

## Focus group sessions

End of year evaluation questionnaire

Qualitative meeting reports written each term by mentors

## Progress Reports

A Progress Report is completed by teachers each term, and highlights any progress that a student may be making in a number of subject areas. The report evaluates overall progress in a subject, work ethic, homework completion, attendance levels and punctuality. Promise Foundation compares the progress report of a pupil over the three school terms in order to effectively assess progress.

## Targets agreed by mentee and mentor at the beginning of the mentoring relationship

At the beginning of the mentoring relationship, a mentee (alongside their mentor) identifies three targets that they would like to achieve by the end of the academic year. This enables the mentee to retain ownership of the mentoring process – directing the

outcome by setting realistic goals to be achieved. This, in turn, helps the young person to realise what they are very capable of achieving.

## Focus Group Sessions

Promise Foundation co-ordinates and leads focus groups for mentors and mentees in separate capacities each term. These provide stakeholders with the opportunity to reflect, openly, as a group on how the program is going and discuss anything that can be done or put in place to improve their experience.

## End of Year Evaluation Questionnaire

This serves to compliment evidence from the Progress Report and mentee led targets and provide an overview of the entire mentoring process. Both mentor and mentee are encouraged to complete the questionnaire.

## Qualitative meeting reports written by mentors

These provide substantial additional insights. The qualitative meeting notes consist of short meeting reports produced by the mentor at the end of each school term that are then emailed to the coordinator. They are brief one-page documents that have yielded a wealth of insight. They have also, in the past, highlighted any areas where the mentors themselves may need support.

# Evaluation of pilot programme

The program has directly impacted over 100 people since its launch in 2013. 45 young people between the ages of 13 – 18 from underprivileged backgrounds have received mentoring.

76% of mentees made progress in work ethics, with 62% making progress in more than two subject areas and a third making progress in more than three areas, since their mentoring relationships began.

Attitudes towards homework also improved significantly, with 78% of mentees showing progress in more than one area of work and 53% improvement in more than two areas of work.

The majority of the mentoring relationships concentrate on 13 – 15 year olds (years 9 – 10), but the charity has also had outstanding successes in the 16 – 18 year old group (years 11 – 13), with 15 out of 20 of those mentees being successful with Further and Higher Education applications.

Young people were also offered work experience opportunities through the scheme in Fashion, Midwifery, Law, Politics, and many other sectors.

Some mentees were recruited to sports institutions including: Premier League Football Club Tottenham Hotspurs, Redbridge Football Club, and a mentee achieved

a Personal Best for 100 metres at the premier club of North of England Athletics, City of Sheffield & Dearne Athletic Club and came second in the nationals for Great Britain under 20s.

At Promise Foundation, mentoring is not expected to yield just academic outcomes. We understand mentoring to be a holistic experience for both mentee and mentor.

50 adults comprising of volunteers from the local area received mentoring training. 90% of these were involved in a mentoring relationship with 93% attendance. A number of adult mentors say that they now feel confident to get involved their local community.

**I want to be a footballer. My mentor, Paul, is a sports coach which is perfect for me. But at the same time, Paul has also motivated me to focus in class and pay more attention. I've always been more sporty than academic, but he's helped me see that studying is important too. (Javarn, 13)**

**"It's a joy to spend my Tuesday mornings with Kelise. She is an amazing girl and it's a privilege to watch her confidence develop. Being a teenager has never been an easy time in life – and the social and academic pressures today are really intense - so to have one hour a week to stop and reflect with someone you can trust is really crucial." (Caroline, mentor)**

# Further Analysis

There are two observations to be made here. Firstly, it must be noted that an hour a week of mentoring will not solve all, (or sometimes any) of a mentee's challenges. What can be expected, though, is some alleviation of pressure and the opportunity to gain a sense of direction; and particularly for the 'silent middles', assurance that they have not been somewhat forgotten by the educational system. We anticipate that mentees will take 'small steps' (either practical or psychological) towards their longer-term goals. Secondly, and crucially, it was noted that mentees – notwithstanding their many challenges – did in the main keep to their mentoring appointments, and implicitly (by turning up) and explicitly (by voicing their appreciation) valued the relationship and found it helpful.

## Providing the access and direction into fulfilling their potential

A key objective of Promise Foundation is to improve how our mentees view their future. We aim to give them direction and access to better opportunities.

## Work placements

A number of our mentees had difficulty finding the right work placement that reflected their interests and passions. Because of this, many found themselves working in jobs that they weren't at all enthused by.

In his speech, David Cameron had this to say about work experience opportunities for young people:

"Work experience for school children can be a transformative opportunity. It gives children the chance to experience work and talk to adults who aren't just authority figures like parents and teachers. At its best, it could really help teenagers establish a network and encourage them to think completely differently about their future. It often does that for those lucky enough to arrange a great placement. But for so many, it either doesn't happen at all, or it is just a wasted week – often spent locally, just watching the clock, never getting kids out of their

**Being mentored has created a desire in me to mentor someone myself, because I can see what a difference it makes. After college I want to study criminology at University. I'm ambitious now, but that's quite a recent thing, I have to say. Being mentored has helped to push me forward, to believe in myself and see that so many things that seemed almost impossible are, actually, quite achievable. (Lylas, 16)**

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**Something else that came out of this experience was a day at The House of Commons. I was speaking at the Promise Foundation's end of year event, and another of the mentors, Tulip Siddiq, who is an MP, heard me and invited me to shadow her for a day at work. It was a brilliant experience. (Charles, 17)**

comfort zone or raising their sights in the slightest. We can change that... especially for the most disadvantaged young people."

Like the Prime Minister, we, too, want to give our mentees the "transformative opportunity" of a work placement in an area that truly inspires and interests them. We want them to gain the experience of having a real job, which will help them to understand the reality of their chosen field of work and thus

decide if they would like to pursue it further.

Our mentors have engaged in a variety of strategies in order to help their mentees gain valuable work placements, and have often employed their useful networks in this regard. They have also helped their mentees with mock interviews, and encouraged them to continue to work on their personal development, so that they can enter the world of work fully prepared.

"Alex also helped me when I was trying to decide which sixth form college would be the best one for me. She gave me a book which listed all the options, went through the choices with me, and also offered some really good tips and suggestions when I was filling out my application...I'm now studying IT at Richmond College and really enjoying it. When I finish my course I'm going to apply for apprenticeships, so I'm really hopeful about my future." (Adam, 18)

"I want to carry on seeing Maya for as long as possible. She said she's going to help me with a revision timetable before my exams, and I think this is really going to be good for me...So far I've completed all the targets that she's set me with my maths homework and this has made a big difference to how I'm doing in class." (Chiara, 13)

## Preparing for Further and Higher Education

Many of the mentors also went with mentees to visit colleges and universities in order to help them understand the various options and routes into Further and Higher Education available to them. This enabled mentees to get a better understanding of what subject area they might like to pursue in the future.

## Accessing Services i.e. Local Libraries / Internet

Although the internal school services provide a backdrop to the mentoring pairs, mentors also equipped young people with the necessary tools to access a number of 'out of school' services, such as their local library for reading, homework and the use of the internet as an effective research engine. They also identified resources for mentees in terms of homework support clubs, Into University, online study tips, and at times working alongside teachers to provide practice exam papers.



## Conclusions and recommendations

Many of the young people mentioned the benefits of increased social networks in their lives, and that these were the result of becoming more engaged with their local communities and also because of taking up new hobbies, interests and activities.

A characteristic shared by many of the mentees was that they were often confused about where to start when it came to choosing a career, going to university or even embarking on new adventures such as travelling and playing sports. Interacting with new and people

from different socio-economic backgrounds was often very difficult for mentees and there seemed to be many barriers preventing them from accessing the local resources in their community.

A number of the young people had parents who had not experienced higher education, although in some cases their neighbours had. Due to lack of confidence, many felt unable to approach their neighbours for help until Promise Foundation provided the opportunity to meet these very neighbours face to face.

A number of our mentors continued mentoring even when the mentoring relationship came to an end oftentimes as a result of mentees moving on to Further and Higher Education institutions. For the vast majority of mentors, the mentoring process is mutually beneficial – it is one that has not only provided a sustainable channel for community engagement but has also added value to their wellbeing and interpersonal relationships.



“No child should be born without a chance. It is a national scandal.”  
- Sally Copley,  
Head of UK Policy  
Save the Children.

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“I have so much enjoyed our talks and am sure she [Giordre] will get the good GCSE grades she deserves. I am really looking forward to our relationship continuing beyond this year and in whichever way she wants it to go.”  
(Ann, mentor)

Promise Foundation recommends that addressing social exclusion should indeed be a collective community effort, however, more should be done at the top level of government to foster an environment where social inclusion can flourish through ensuring that there is a greater focus on the ‘silent middles’.

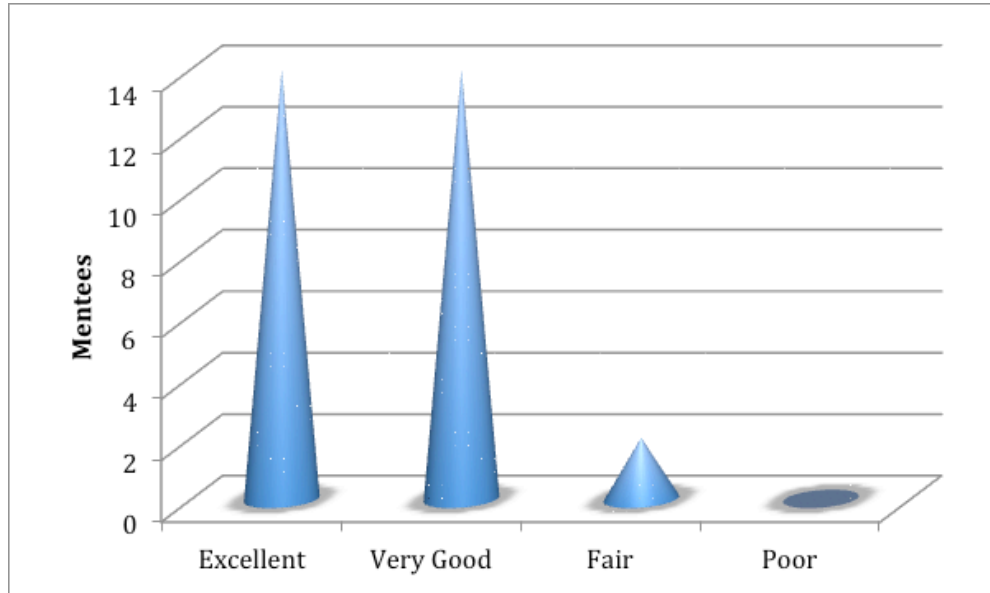
Currently the Promise Foundation mentoring programme operates on a traditional face-to-face basis. However, it has become clear during the delivery of the pilot that a significant number of beneficiaries wants “virtual” support, where the mentor would be available via email, Skype, text message or through access to a secure social networking site. However, we strongly believe that as face-to-face interaction, particularly among our target group, becomes even sparser, e-mentoring will take considerable value away from the befriending process as well as pose a number safeguarding issues.

# Appendices'

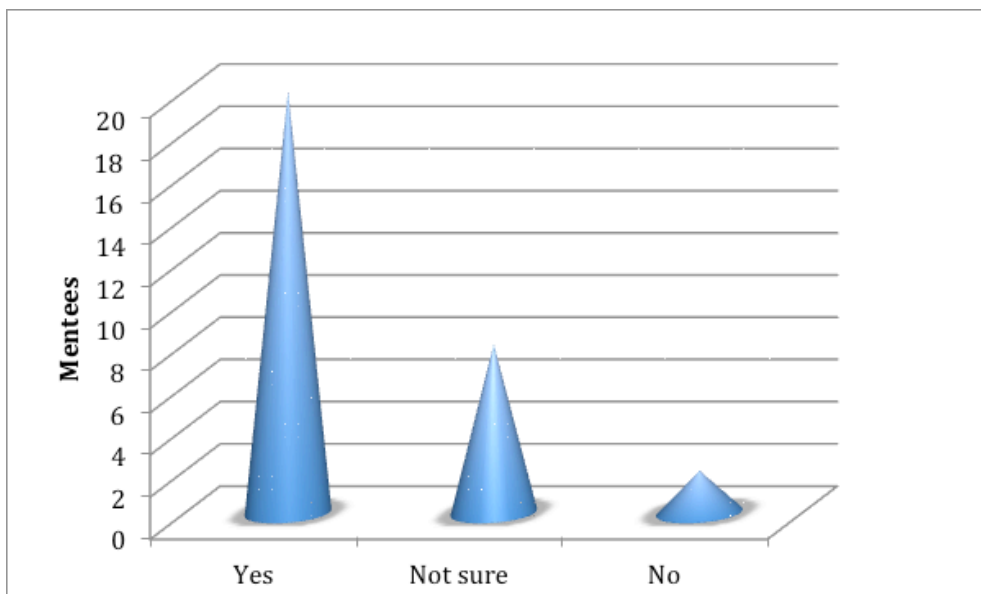


## Mentee End of Year Evaluation Questionnaire

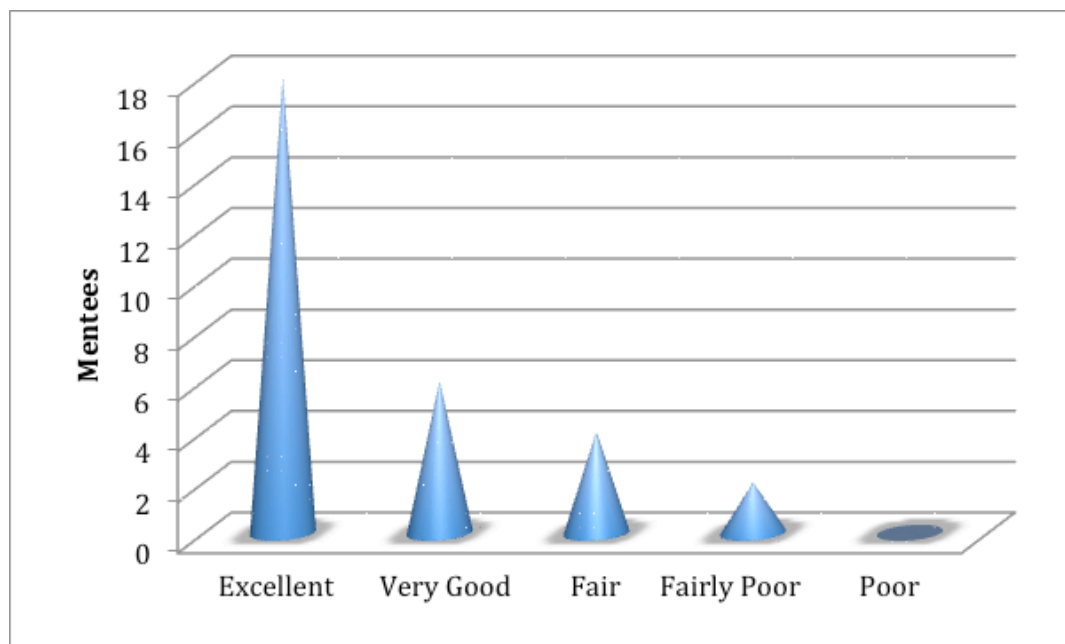
1. How would you rate the mentoring programme so far?



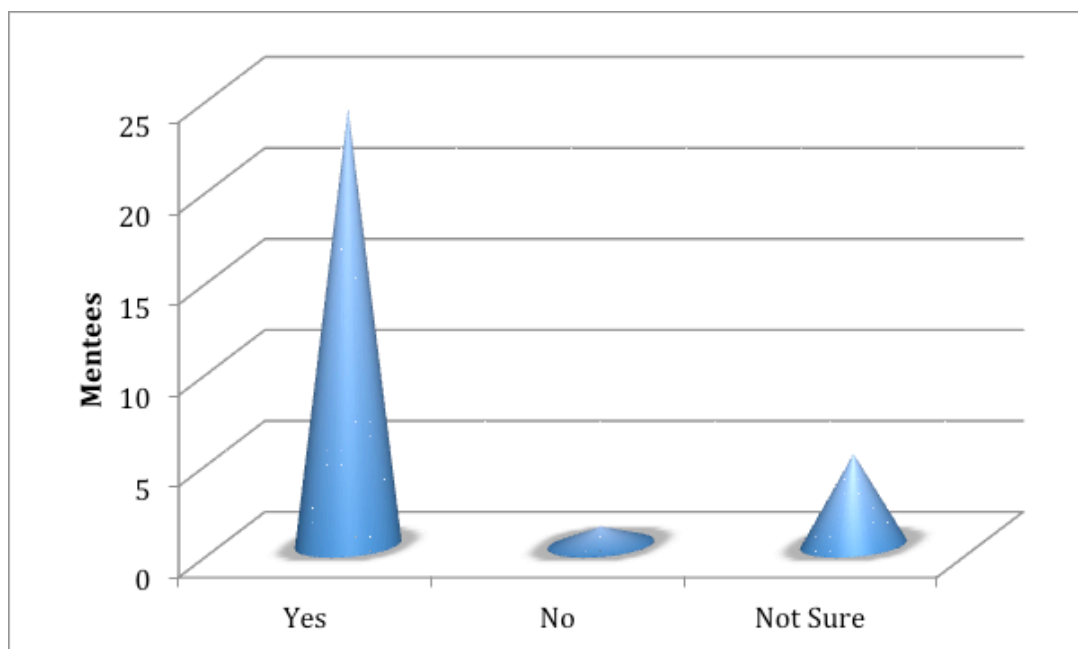
2. Are you enjoying being part of the programme?



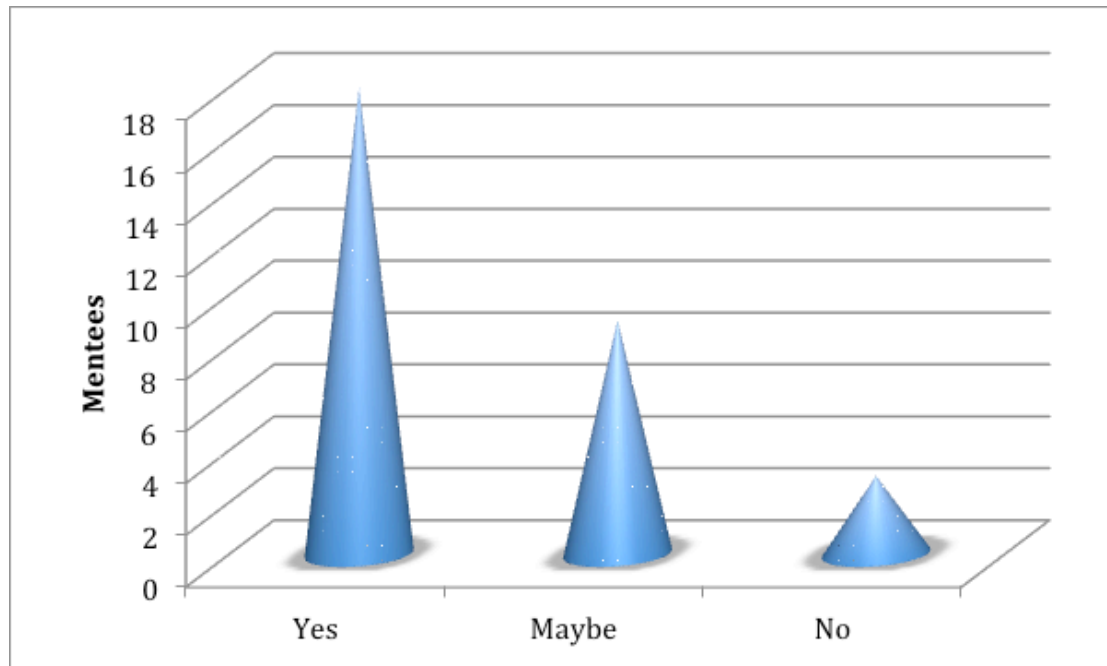
3. How do you feel about your relationship with your mentor?



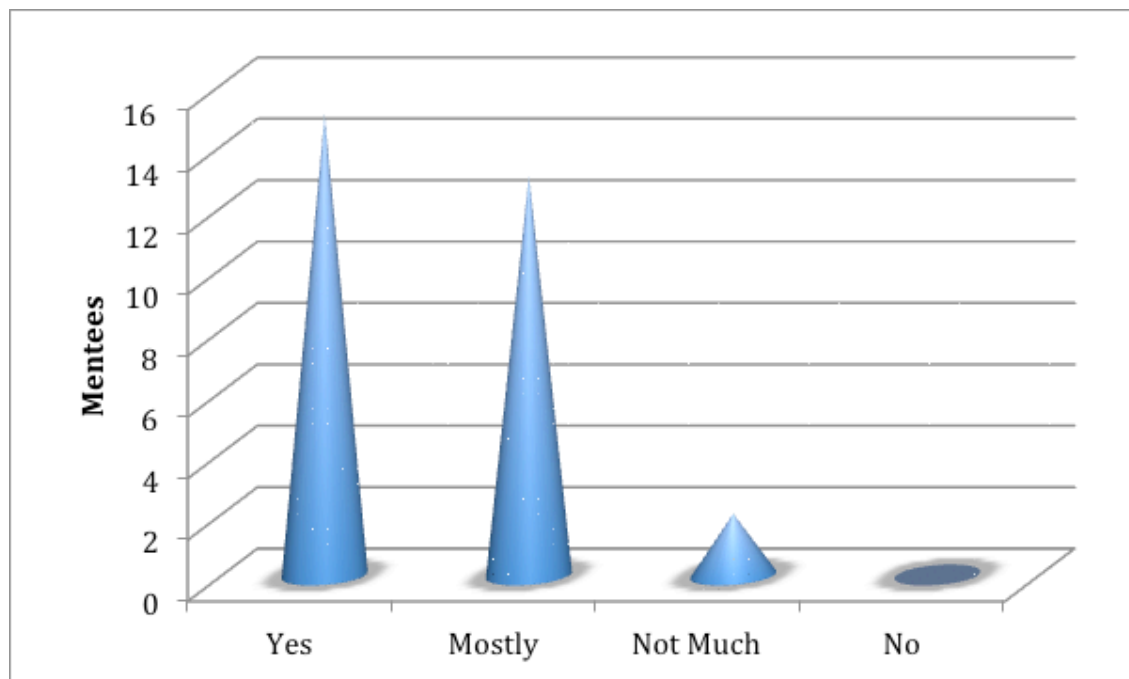
4. Has the weekly meetings strengthened your relationship?



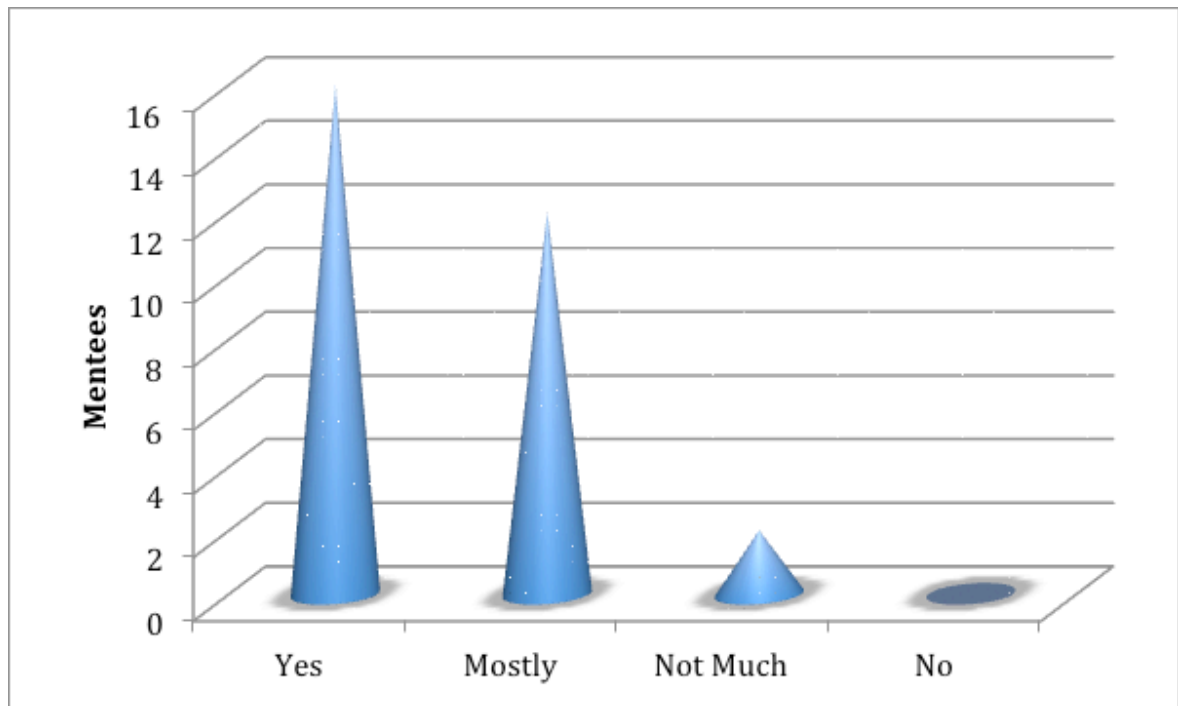
5. Would you like to meet with your mentor more often?



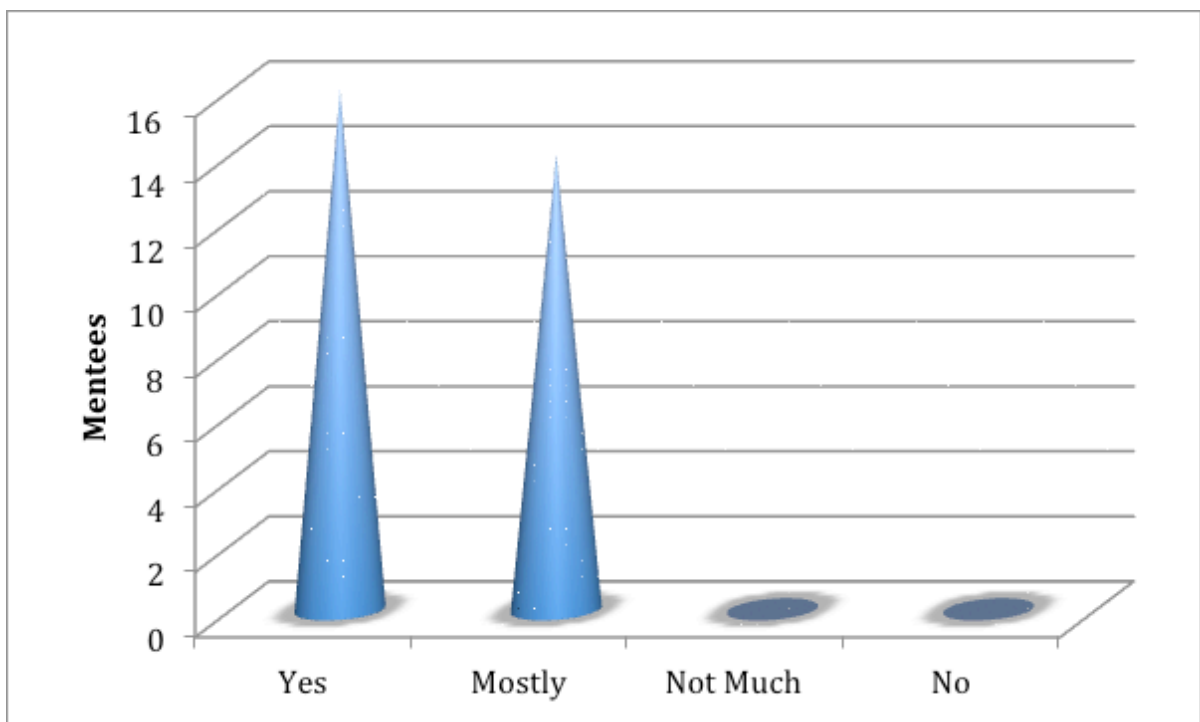
6. Does having a mentor help you do better in school?



7. Are you learning new things from your mentor?



8. Do you feel comfortable talking to your mentor about things that you find challenging?





9. Do you feel comfortable talking to the mentor Programme Coordinator about things you enjoy and find challenging about your mentoring relationship?

